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ABSTRACT

Designed to aid elementary, middle, junior high, and high school library media staff in developing a quality collection, "Analysis of Client Groups" poses questions about students, faculty and administration, and parents and community. Brief discussions also consider methods for collecting data; review of student records; conversations with students and staff; review of school reports, newsletters, and community bulletins; and conducting surveys. "Black Studies: A Bibliography" provides full bibliographic information for 12 useful selection tools and 12 reference materials for implementing Chapter 571 of the Acts of 1986, Education--Libraries and Media Centers in Public Schools--Black History. A listing of 17 publishers is also included. In "The Role of Evaluation in the Library Media Collection Development Process," Jacqueline Mancall discusses reasons for evaluating school library media collections and briefly describes various evaluation methods, including impressionistic approaches, comparison of the collection with an authoritative list, measurement of usage, and bibliographic techniques. Finally, "Weeding: Reassessment of Library Media Collections" discusses the reassessment of collections using the general criteria of condition, duplication, age, and use, and presents brief guidelines to be considered when examining each section of a school library media center organized according to the Dewey Decimal Classification System. (KM)

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BUILDING LIBRARY MEDIA COLLECTIONS

Analysis of Client Groups

Black Studies: A Bibliography

The Role of Evaluation in the Library Media Collection Development Process

"Weeding": Reassessment of Library Media Collections

Maryland State Department of Education

1987

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BUILDING LIBRARY MEDIA

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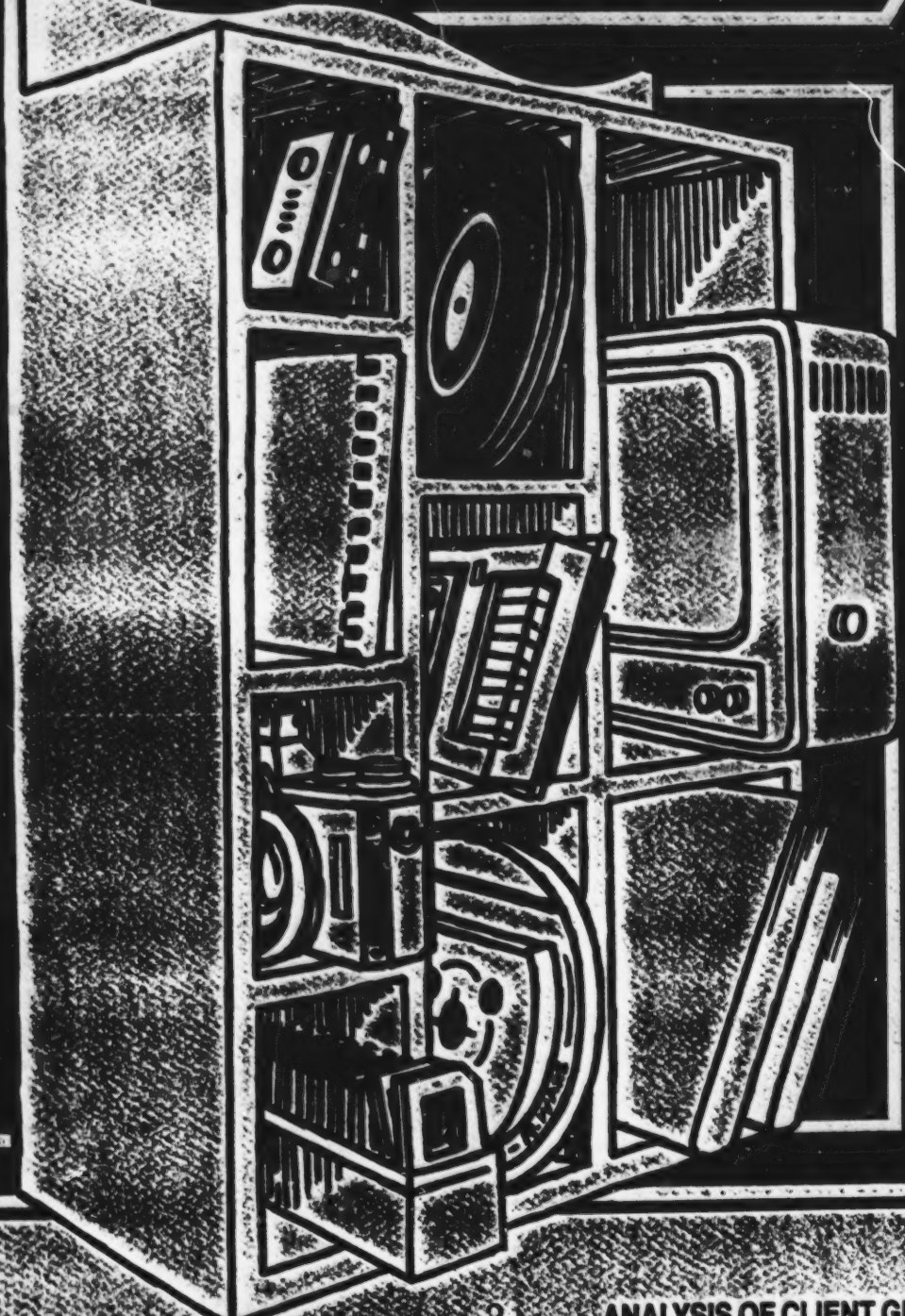

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Analysis of Client Groups

Thorough knowledge and understanding of school library media center users and their needs are fundamental to providing instructional resources. Potential clients or user groups include students, faculty, instructional support personnel, clerical personnel, building and food services personnel, administrators, parents, volunteers, and other members of the community. Careful consideration of the needs of this population should enable the school library media specialist to cooperatively make wise decisions in developing a usable library media center collection that supports the educational program.

Considerations for Client Groups

At each school level, whether elementary, middle and junior high, or senior high, serious consideration must be given to the intellectual, emotional, and physical needs of students as they learn to use the resources provided by library media centers. As students develop skills and advance through school levels, the progressively larger variation in needs increases the required resources. Library media staff in each school has an obligation to be as knowledgeable as possible about student needs and corresponding resources. The library media staff should respond thoroughly to the following questions for developing a quality collection. The greater the perception of the library media personnel about their school population, the more likely they will evaluate, select, provide, and use materials that support constructive instruction.

Students

Ability and Achievement Levels

- What are the ability levels (cognitive, affective, and psychomotor) of students in each class and grade? How do levels at which students are operating relate to the course content and general methods of instruction employed in each class and grade?. What materials would match or fulfill the needs of students in each class or grade?
- What are the achievement levels of students in each class and grade compared to their ability levels? What does the comparison reflect in terms of course content and method of instruction? What materials would contribute to student learning if there is significant disparity at either end of the spectrum? What materials would contribute to student learning where there is low achievement and high ability, or high ability and high achievement, etc.?
- What are the reading levels of students in each class and grade?* How does the overall reading level affecting course content and method of instruction? What is the range in readability of materials needed in each course, subject area, and grade to support the reading level of these students?

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* For the purpose of monitoring student progress, reading level is determined in the State of Maryland by using a combination of the following: scores on standardized achievement tests, informal inventories, teachers' observations, and placement in basal reading programs.

- How are students of different ability levels grouped for instruction in each class or grade? How does this grouping relate to the course content and methods of instruction in each class and grade? What effect does this grouping have on materials that might be effective with entire classes, small groups, or individuals?
- Is the creativity level of students promoted by the majority of staff? What materials have been selected or provided to encourage fluency, flexibility, and elaboration in creative and critical thinking?
- What is the general emotional well-being of students in each class and grade? How does this affect course content and methods of instruction? What materials are available to support students with special problems?
- What is the range of physical differences of students in each class and grade? How have these differences affected course content and methods of instruction? What special material and equipment must be provided for some students?

Learning Modes

- What is known about the learning modes of students in each class and grade? How has instruction been designed to capitalize on students' strengths in learning through sight, sound, touch, etc.? What audiovisual and other nonprint materials are needed in each content or subject area? What formats might be more productive in facilitating learning?
- How has the grouping of students with different learning modality strengths affected content and methods of instruction? What nonprint formats and accompanying equipment would support instruction of these students?

Learning Styles

- What is known about the learning or cognitive styles of students in each class and grade? How have these styles affected the content and method of instruction in each class and grade? What materials are needed to both challenge students and to support their learning styles?
- How has the grouping of students with different learning styles affected content and methods of instruction? What materials and equipment might be necessary in each content or subject area to support student interaction and learning more appropriately?

Ethnic and Cultural Background

- What is the ethnic and cultural background of students in each class and grade? Does the collection include materials that supportively reflect those ethnic and cultural differences in each subject or content area?

Language Differences

- What are the speech and language differences of students in each class? What are some of the languages read or spoken by bilingual students? How have language differences affected the course content or subject area in each class and grade? What materials

might be useful in each content or subject area that would help students with language differences learn?

Maturity Levels

- How is the maturity or sophistication level of students reflected in acquisitions to the collection? What materials might be helpful in certain areas of the curriculum?

Interest Levels

- What are some of the more prevalent interests of students in each class and grade? Do these interests relate to areas of the curriculum? What materials have been acquired that reflect these interests? What materials and equipment are necessary to make the collection more responsive to the interests of students?

Faculty and Administration

The library media specialist will find the needs of administration and staff in a school equally important to the instruction of students. The school philosophy as it is implemented determines both what materials are necessary and how they are used in instruction of students. The library media specialist should examine the following areas.

Leadership

- How is the educational program in the school managed? What role does the library media center have in this organizational structure? How does the leadership of this educational organization view the selection, evaluation, and acquisition of resources? How does this leadership view determine what materials are needed?

Curriculum

- What are the required curriculum areas at each grade level? Who is responsible for determining content, skills, and time requirements for each curriculum area? What materials have been identified for each curriculum area? What process did those responsible for curriculum areas follow to determine necessary resources? What is the role of each teacher in obtaining and using materials in each curriculum area?

Instructional Methods

- What instructional approaches are encouraged for use by teachers with each class or grade? How do teachers organize for effective instruction? How do teachers react to their students and what methods do they use to motivate students? What do these teaching approaches, organizational patterns, and motivational methods demand in terms of materials and equipment?

Textbooks

- What textbook materials are required by teachers for each class in various curriculum areas? What process is used to determine the textbook in each curriculum area to be used by classes? What impact has the choice of textbook materials had on the need for

materials? How has the use of textbook materials by teachers affected the library media center collection? What materials are needed to support the textbook?

Scheduling and Class Size

- What are the class sizes in each curriculum area and how have teachers responded to that size? How are these classes scheduled for instruction? What effect do class size and scheduling have on materials and equipment needed for instruction? What materials and equipment are needed?

Facility

- What effect has the facility had on the instruction provided by teachers in each curriculum area? What requirements have facilities made on materials and equipment that may be effectively used by teachers (electric outlets, windows, walls, display space, noise levels, etc.)? What materials and equipment are necessary to make maximum use of the facilities provided?

Parents and Community

Support of the library media center by parents and the community is a bulwark to independent learning and students' intellectual freedom. An understanding of parents and the community will help in developing a library media collection.

Community Description

- Describe the students' community (businesses, homes, economic levels, rural or urban, traffic patterns). How will these elements determine general student interests, parent's expectations, and students' backgrounds? What materials will be needed to support these interests, expectations, and backgrounds?

Community Opportunities

- What are the cultural, recreational, and educational opportunities available? What impact do these opportunities have on materials that are needed in the library media collection?

Community Organizations

- What methods are used to communicate news and concerns to the school? What impact do these communication networks have on needs for materials?

Methods for Collecting Data

Information about the people served by the school library media center may be gathered in a variety of ways. In fact, all of the strategies may be used together for a better review of the collection. This data collection process is continuous for library media staff who wish to predict and purchase those resources of greatest instructional value. Several strategies are valid for learning about items that will contribute to a more viable collection.

Review of Student Records

Cumulative student records and reports furnish achievement data, school progress data, attendance figures, health information, and other anecdotal records. Sample work, reading scores on various tests, and even interest inventories are often part of the students' files. When examining records of various faculty's classes, the library media specialist learns more about ability levels and the kinds of materials that would be beneficial for instruction.

Conversations with Students and Staff

Informal discussions with students and staff about their interests and concerns offer valuable insights that are especially advantageous when searching for materials which will motivate students and staff. Students will reveal areas of personal interest and staff may comment about curriculum areas where more information is needed or about materials in various formats that were superb. These clues highlight the tastes, styles, and methods for which the collection must be serviceable. The staff may also provide insight into special needs of students that require information on the same topic in varied formats. Discussion and active listening can be powerful, effective methods for gaining information.

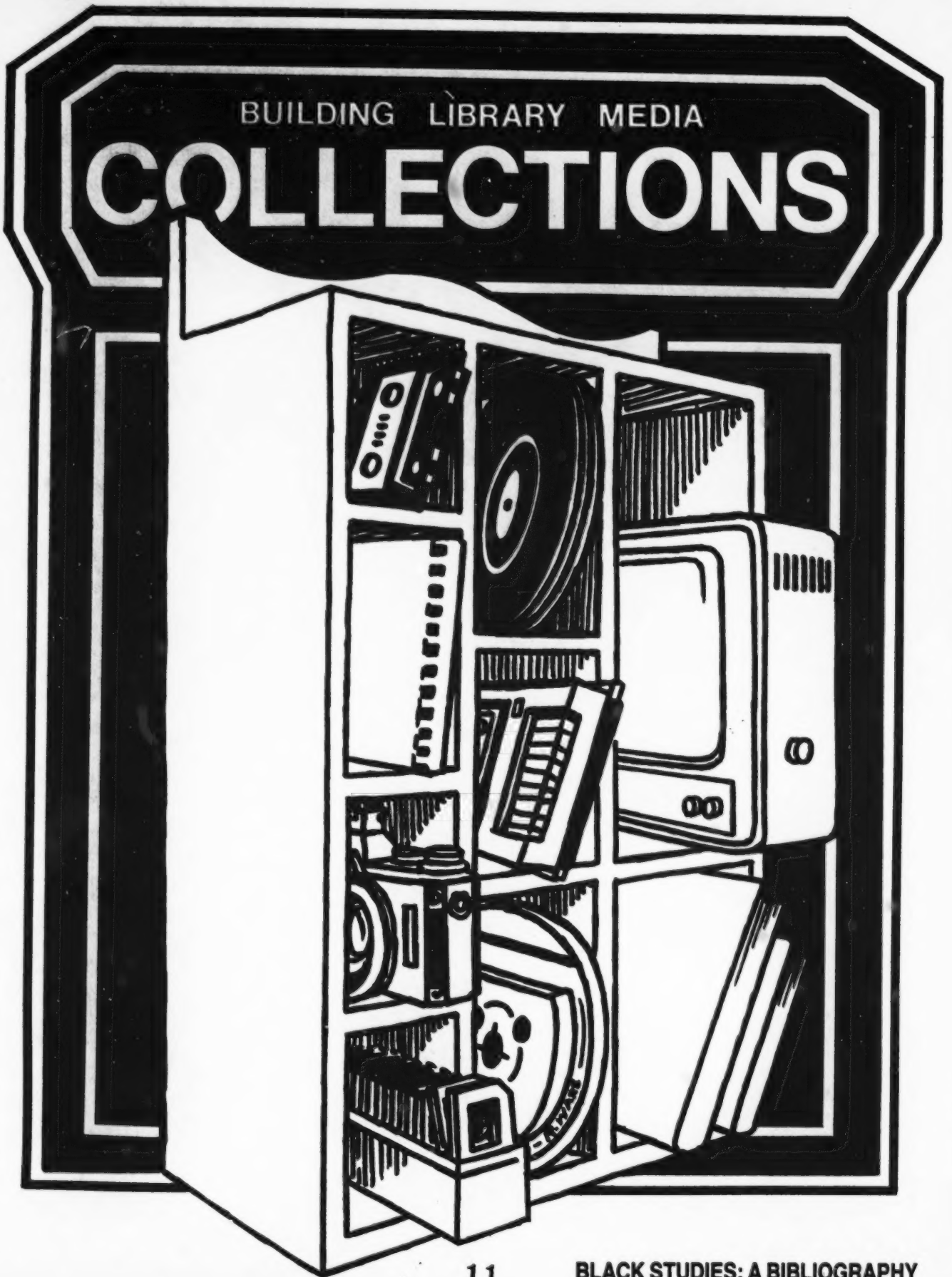
Review of School Reports, Newsletters, and Community Bulletins

By constant reading of general school reports and newsletters, the library media specialist may develop a keen understanding of general trends and specific issues. Local community activities and events are highlighted in community newsletters and on bulletin boards. Thess help identify special interest areas of the community.

Conducting Surveys

With approval and assistance from the principal, the library media specialist may develop questionnaires for surveying teacher or student interests and information needs. Checklists, open-ended questions, or multiple choice items are often useful for identifying curriculum areas where resources are used and needed.

Continuous use of these methods should prove to be an effective way of learning more about the school library media center's clients or users.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Selection Tools

Afro-American History: A Bibliography Vol II. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC/CLIO, 1981. 394p. $98.50.

Contains 4200 entries covering blacks in America. Some of the categories covered are: traditions in Afro-American culture, the black experience in colonial America, slavery and freedom, and the contemporary scene. Includes a subject index with bibliographic, geographic, chronologic, and subject descriptors.

The Afro-American in Books for Children: Including Books about Africa and the West Indies. Washington, DC: District of Columbia Public Library, Children's Services, 1985. 97p. $2.00.

Annotates books on Afro-Americans. Topics include: picture books and easy reading; history, geography, and biography; folklore and fairy tales; poetry, art, and music; and fiction.

The Black American in Books for Children: Readings in Racism, 2nd ed. Donnarae MacCann and Gloria Woodard, eds. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1985. 310p. $25.00.

Provides information on black literature, education, publishing, law, and cultural and social history.

Black Americans: Media Skills Handbook. Barbara L. Cox and Regina Crutchfield, comps. Rockville, MD: Department of Instructional Resources, Montgomery County Public Schools, 1986. 97p. $10.00.

Contains library media skills objectives activities (K–12), a list of selected organizations, currently published periodicals, and a bibliography.

The Black Experience in the Books for Children. Office of Children's Services. New York, NY: New York Public Library, Office of Branch Libraries, 1984. $3.00.

Annotates titles about the black experience, arranged geographically and by subject areas such as picture books, readers, stories for young children, stories, folklore, poetry and verse, music and the arts, race and racism, civil rights, biography, periods of history, and references.

Black Literature for High School Students. Barbara Dodd Stanford and Karima Amin. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978. 273p. $7.25

Describes 370 book-length works including adult fiction, adolescent literature, poetry, biography/autobiography, anthologies, and literary criticism. Ten classroom-tested teaching units cover topics from slave narrative to contemporary protest literature.

"Books on African-American Themes: A Recommended Book List." Beryle Banfield. **Council on Interracial Books for Children Bulletin.** 16: 4–8.

Lists books on African-American themes. It is arranged according to subject areas such as African-American history, African and Caribbean folktales, African connection, biography/autobiography, fiction, and poetry.

Ethnic Film and Filmstrip Guide for Libraries and Media Centers: A Selective Filmography. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1980. 277p. $30.00.

Lists, in an alphabetical arrangement, 140 individual titles. Annotations include appropriate age levels for films. Entries are cross-referenced within the text.

Index to Black American Authors in Collective Biographies. Dorothy W. Campbell. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1983. 162p. $27.50.

Provides reference to biographical information on more than 1,800 black American writers who have been chronicled in collective biographies.

On Being Black: A Selected List of Books, Films, Filmstrips, and Recordings for Young Adults. Office of Children's Services. New York, NY: New York Public Library, The Office of Branch Libraries, 1985. 19p. $3.00.

Annotates all forms of media on the black experience. It contains a directory of sources.

The Progress of Afro-American Women: A Selected Bibliography and Resource Guide. Janet L. Sims. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980. 378p. $35.00.

Contains 4,000 references to the lives and contributions of Afro-American women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries arranged according to 34 subject sections. An index provides access by author.

Selected Black American, African, and Caribbean Authors: A Bibliography. James A. Page and Joe Min Roh. Littleton, CO: Libraries Unlimited, 1985. 402p. $55.00.

Covers 632 authors of African descent published in the United States from the eighteenth century to the present.

Reference Materials

Chapter 571 of the Acts of 1986 (Education—Libraries and Media Centers in Public Schools—Black History) requires that each school system acquire reference materials for the study of black Americans. Those materials cited support Chapter 571 by providing background information useful for debates, research, and instant facts about blacks.

Afro-American Experience in Contempory Children's Fiction. Rudine Sims. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982. 111p. $7.75.

Lists 150 books for preschool through grade eight by Afro-American authors. It describes the changing image of Afro-American children in realistic fiction published from 1965–1970.

Afro-American Fiction Writers After 1955. Trudier Harris, ed. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1985. 350p. $82.00.

Features essays on the lives and careers of 49 black authors.

The Afro-American Short Story. Preston M. Yancy, comp. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986. 171p. $35.00.

Covers 850 stories written by some 300 authors, published between 1950 and 1982. The work is organized into four sections: part one lists all the stories chronologically; part two

lists the anthologies and collections in which the stories appear and their contents; part three features critical commentaries on approximately 100 of the stories; and part four lists the stories by author.

Black American Writers Past and Present: A Biographical and Bibliographical Dictionary. Theressa G. Rush. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1975. 865p. $47.50.

Contains biographical and bibliographical information on 2,000 black American writers, living and deceased. The biographical information included in this work was provided by the writers themselves.

Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle. Rhoda Lois Blumberg. Boston, MA: G. K. Hall, 1984. 240p. $8.95.

Provides background on black history from the days of slavery through the first half of the twentieth century.

Encyclopedia of Black America. W. August Low and Virgil A. Clift. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1981. 921p. $24.95.

Provides information on Afro-American life and culture in a one-volume encyclopedia.

In Black and White. Mary Mace Spradling. Detroit, MI: Gale Research, 1980. 1282p. $120.90.

Identifies over 15,000 blacks in America, Africa, and elsewhere and the magazines, books, and newspapers in which information about them may be found.

International Library of Afro-American Life and History. Cornwells Heights, PA: Publishers Agency, The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, 1976. 10 volumes. O.P.

Contains short essay-length articles on the Afro-American experience in America. The volumes cover music and art, the civil war, theater, sports, biographies, medicine, literature, and factual information of a people brought from Africa. Each volume is arranged topically and deals with a particular subject.

Listen Children: An Anthology of Black Literature. Dorothy S. Strickland, ed. New York: Bantam Books, 1982. 160p. $2.95.

Provides plays, speeches, and stories by black authors on the black experience.

The Negro Almanac: A Reference Work on the Afro-American. Harry A. Ploski and James Williams. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1982. 1550p. $59.95.

Provides historical and statistical information on black Americans. The biography section documents the lives of hundreds of black Americans who have made significant contributions in various fields of endeavor.

20 Black Women: A Profile of Contemporary Black Maryland Women. Francis N. Beckles. Baltimore, MD: Gateway Press, 1978. 146p. $4.95.

Contains essay-length biographies on 20 contemporary black women who have made their mark in various professions. All of the women live in Maryland.

Who's Who Among Black Americans. Education Commission of the States. Denver, CO: The Commission, 1985. 900p. $90.00.

Contains 16,000 entries on prominent black Americans.

Publishers

ABC-CLIO
Riviera Campus
2040 Alameda Padre Serra
P.O. Box 4397
Santa Barbara, CA 93140

Bantam Books
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10019

Council on Interracial Books for Children
Bulletin
1841 Broadway
New York, NY 10023

District of Columbia Public Library
Children's Services
Washington, DC 20001

Education Commission of the States
1860 Lincoln Street
Suite 300
Denver, CO 80295

Gale Research
Book Tower
Detroit, MI 48226

Gateway Press
1001 N. Calvert Street
Baltimore, MD 21202

Greenwood Press
88 Post Road, W.
Westport, CT 06881

G.K. Hall
70 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111

Libraries Unlimited
P.O. Box 263
Littleton, CO 80160

McGraw-Hill
1221 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

Montgomery County Public Schools
Department of Instructional Resources
Division of Instructional Materials
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, IL 61801

New York Public Library
The Office of Branch Libraries
455 5th Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Publishers Agency
The Association for the Study
of Afro-American Life and History
Cornwells Heights, PA 19020

Scarecrow Press
52 Liberty Street
P.O. Box 656
Metuchen, NJ 08840

John Wiley
605 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10158

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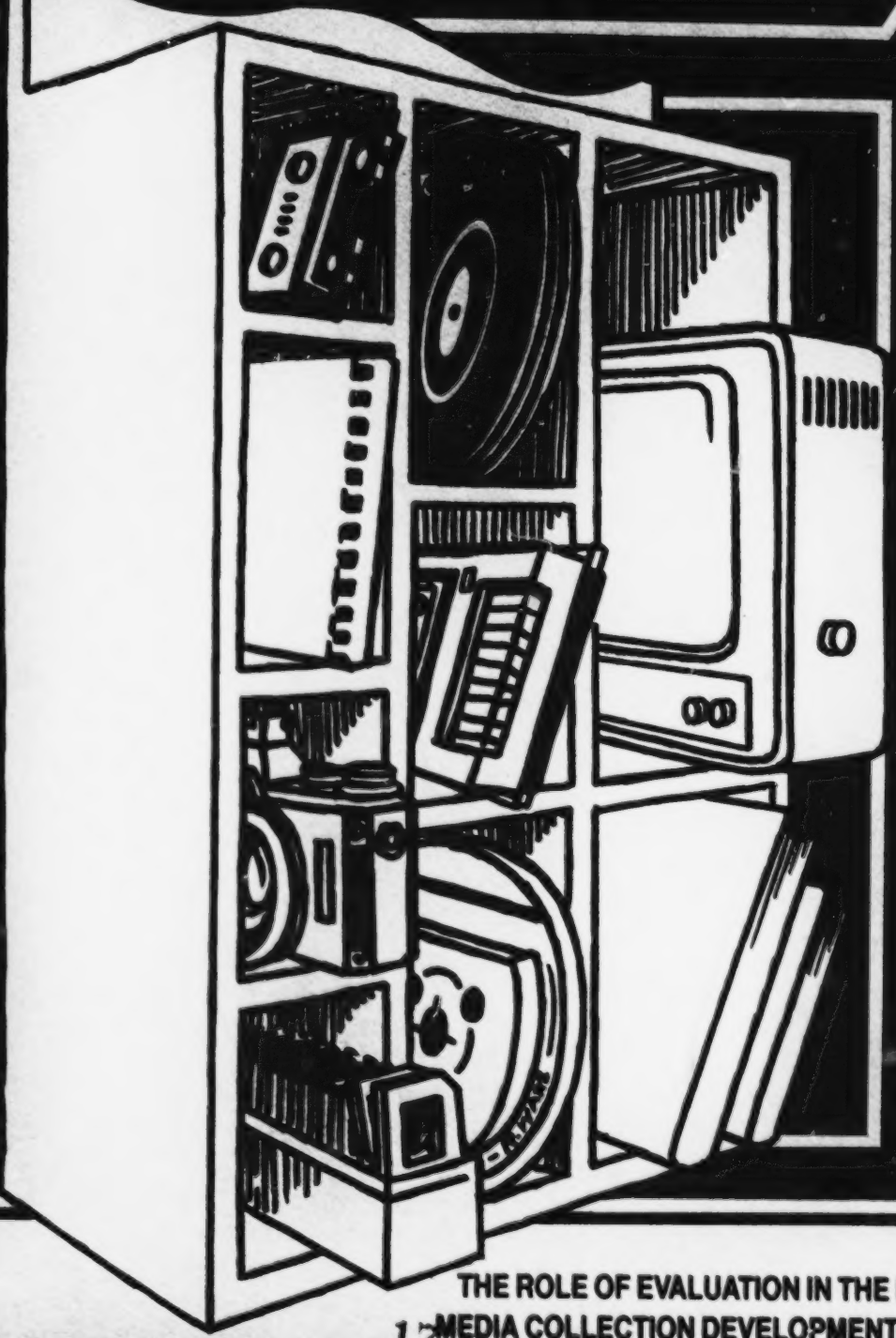

THE ROLE OF EVALUATION IN THE LIBRARY MEDIA COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

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THE ROLE OF EVALUATION IN THE LIBRARY MEDIA COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

By Jacqueline Mancall

The concept of collection development is a recent one. The deliberate management strategy of shaping collections according to some type of master plan has only appeared as a management technique within the last fifteen years and appeared, as you might guess, in relation to large university collections. The concepts and techniques that have been developed, however, can be applied to many types of libraries and library collections. One of the underlying reasons for the growing attention paid to more "scientific" collection development is the insistence on accountability. Funders demand that libraries demonstrate not only that money for materials is wisely spent, but also that there is a demonstrated relationship between the materials collected and the information needs and characteristics of the intended users of the collection.

One of the clearest ways to visualize collection development is to look at it as a process. One model for examining this process suggests that there are six elements that must be considered: (1) analysis of the library's patron community; (2) preparation of a collection development policy based on the findings of the community analysis; (3) selection or identification of materials to be acquired; (4) the actual acquisition or acquisition steps; (5) weeding, or the removal of the collection to its users; and (6) evaluation or assessment of the value of the collection to its users.[1]

The first step in this process model focuses on gathering data to describe a library's community users or patron group. For school library media centers, this is less complicated than for their public library counterparts. Each school has a relatively well-defined community. Students fall within specific age ranges. School library media specialists know something about academic abilities from school records and discussions with teachers and administrators. The curriculum, which the school library media center is designed to support, is described by state and local authorities. In addition, many school library media specialists serve on curriculum committees. There are numerous paths to collecting the information needed for a description of a local community. Some library media specialists may already use local data collection methods, such as questionnaires on library use that are administered to students and teachers.

It is important to remember that although school library media specialists are all associated with the same central type of collection, actual communities are different. These differences have to be accounted for in collection decisions. Once a real "feel" for the community of users has been achieved, a written policy statement can be produced based on program expectations and an understanding of the needs of users. This policy statement should indicate the subjects and material formats that will be collected at a given level of intensity or depth. The aim is to provide credence for collection activities. Also, written policy will help demonstrate to funders that the library is a businesslike operation, operated on

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Dr. Jacqueline C. Mancall, College of Information Studies, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. 1982.

[1] Evans, G. Edward. *Developing Library Collections.* Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, 1979.

an efficient and impersonal basis. And, if shifts in personnel occur, written policy provides for stable decision making.

The next two steps in this process model—selection and acquisition of materials—are the parts of the collection development process that have received the most attention historically. Criteria for selecting material is available in numerous textbooks and probably could be recited "by heart" by most professionally trained library media specialists. Professional training focuses on selecting materials that are accurate, unbiased, and well written. The reputations of authors, publishers, or producers are considered. Clarity of presentation is a factor in the purchase decision. Often format is a consideration. Inclusion of illustrative or illustrative supplementary items such as indexes or bibliographies are also part of the selection decision. After selection decisions are made, the most routine part of the collection development process, acquisitions, is initiated.

The most neglected steps in the collection development process are weeding and evaluation—often because practitioners are busy serving patrons, bringing in and processing materials, or teaching students. Weeding involves more than the dispensing of old and damaged materials in a collection. It should include identifying obsolete, unused, or rarely used items and making decisions about their removal. The library literature indicates that circulation increases after rigorous weeding.

The final link in the collection development process is evaluation. Evaluation allows the library media specialist to analyze this entity called "the collection" and how it is used in order to anticipate demand and to shape the collection accordingly. Evaluation means determining the value of something. Evaluating a collection means determining the utility or benefit of the materials for the library users and determining how the collection meets their personal and academic needs. Evaluating the school library media collection will demonstrate how the collection meets the program needs of the institution. This is not a static measurement. The contemporary school collection exists for a purpose: to support the changing informational and recreational needs of a particular group of users.

Evaluation is performed to accomplish the following:

1. To give collection managers a way of describing with some degree of accuracy what exists in relation to what is needed. The scope of the collection can be described (i.e., what subjects are covered and to what extent). The utility of the collection, or a part of it, can be explained.

2. To provide a measure of the effectiveness of policies—particularly the effectiveness of policies that relate specifically to subjects that are to be collected. Evaluation allows professionals to see if and how materials in these subjects are actually used.

3. To provide concrete data that permits managers to target monetary resources in areas needing attention. We can see if we are really supporting ongoing institutional programs. Do buying patterns reflect the emphasis of the institution, or are purchases haphazard?

4. To answer common questions such as: How large is the collection in comparison to similar ones? How good is the collection in comparison to some subjective criterion, such as a list of recommended titles?

5. To extend intuition about what is needed. Quantitative and qualitative judgements provide evidence for informed decision making.

There is a vast amount of literature available on the subject of evaluation. Collections are composed of physical objects and are therefore assumed to be measurable. They have been measured, particularly in our academic counterparts—college and university libraries.

Various evaluation approaches exist. Perhaps the easiest method to understand and use is the impressionistic evaluation of the collection by an expert. In its simplest form, this means selecting an evaluator to inspect all or a part of the collection. The evaluator is expected to emerge with at least a feeling about the quality of what was examined. Usually, concern is directed toward estimating such qualities as depth of the collection in an area or group of areas. An impression of the collection's usefulness can be described in relation to a curriculum or a particular subject. Strengths as well as deficiencies are identified. The evaluator draws on various sources and personally examines the shelflist and the shelves. The collection may be measured against a list of recommended titles or a small group of lists that the expert feels will indicate strengths as well as gaps in the titles held. Institutions of higher education select subject specialists or highly trained subject bibliographers to do this type of evaluation. A school library media center could attempt impressionistic evaluation at a variety of levels. If local use is the baseline factor, select local experts such as teachers who are particularly knowledgeable in certain subject areas. Students could also help by evaluating popular areas that they know well. This method can be supplemented by conducting a user survey, using a questionnaire or an interview format. A library self-survey is always useful to employ in combination with other evaluation methods. The major weakness of impressionistic evaluation is that it is overwhelmingly subjective. Also, it may be difficult to locate an adequate evaluator. It does have a place, however, in collection evaluation. Opinions of "those who are supposed to know" do have importance, particularly in conjunction with other methods of evaluating a collection.

Closely related to impressionistic evaluation is a second method of collection evaluation: measuring the collection against a list of recommended titles. This popular method involves comparing the library's collection to a recognized, authoritative list. This list could be a basic tool, such as Bowker's *Elementary School Library Collection* or H.W. Wilson's *Senior High School Catalog*. Both of these tools are well accepted as lists of suitable titles for school library media collections. In using a list-checking approach to evaluate a periodical collection, the evaluator can measure the library's subscription list against an indexing tool that is considered appropriate for the needs of particular users. The most obvious example for schools is either the *Abridged Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* or the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* (RGPL). The evaluator determines whether the titles represented in the collection are indexed in this particular tool and calculates what percentage of the titles indexed in *RGPL* are included in the school collection. The evaluator will state how good the collection is in an ideal sense. "Ideal" here means the perfect collection as described by an authority or a committee of experts for a particular user group.

List checking may be used alone or in combination with other methods. It is frequently used by accrediting committees, whose attention is focused on meeting standards. These standards focus on numbers of items, as well as on specifications that libraries should include arbitrary titles represented in standard bibliographic tools. A criticism of checklists is that selection of titles means the omission of many worthwhile ones. Also, the titles suggested may have little relevance to local interest or need. In fact, lists such as the *Elementary School Library Collection* and *Senior High School Catalog* are already out-of-date when they reach their public. In addition, since lists contain approved titles there is no penalty for poor titles. Lists may reveal riches and identify poverty areas, but they do not set up a scorecard.

They do not provide a definitive method. No one can say what percentage of titles on a list a library should have.

Using lists to evaluate collections is based on the assumption that the listed books are desirable for all libraries of a certain type. Although this may not be true, many librarians feel this method helps them identify major gaps and weaknesses and provides them with a handy selection guide. If this is the method selected, then a specially prepared list would be the most useful one to use. For example, if a part of the collection is being evaluated, a list of titles for that specific area can be compiled using retrospective tools like the *Senior High School Catalog* or *Elementary School Library Collection,* as well as titles suggested as supplementary materials by textbooks in use or curriculum material guides. One approach might be to select a small number of what are considered appropriate retrospective lists and compare the collection to all of them. The assumption is that titles that appear on many lists are well-chosen ones, and as the number of recommendations falls off, this becomes an indication of lesser quality. This is an even more time-consuming method than using just one list. If you select this method you must believe that experts do know best what should be in a local collection. This has been the traditional wisdom in the past. It made a great deal of sense when there were vast sums of money to build collections and little time to do it. Times, of course, have changed. Limited money, coupled with a focus on accountability and the necessity to respond to local use has meant that other methods must also be considered.

A third group of techniques addresses this problem by examining the collection based on usage factors. This type of approach is based on two assumptions: first, that the adequacy of the collection is directly related to its use; and second, that circulation records give a reasonably representative picture of the use made of the library. True evaluation of a library should be arrived at by a study of the extent to which its clientele accomplishes its purposes. Circulation does tell us who used the materials and how much various parts of the collection were used. If library media specialists can gather and examine statistics on how collections are used, they will have clues on how to adjust collection practices.

The most accessible measure of use is circulation records. The late 1970s and early 1980s crystallized the importance of demonstrating to funders how public funds are spent. For school library media centers, this means showing that actual, demonstrated use of particular types and subjects has been considered in collection practices. There are certain things practitioners should know, however, to avoid hysteria when looking at use. The following phenomenon in the use of materials appears over and over again: a small portion of any collection satisfies a great amount of use and many items in a collection circulate infrequently or not at all. This has been referred to in the literature on collection evaluation as the "80/20 rule."[2] This rule implies that 80 percent of the circulation of materials in a collection is satisfied by 20 percent of the holdings. In other words, a small number of items circulate very frequently. This small group is often referred to as the core of the collection or the core collection. Intriguingly, this core may be slightly larger in schools and public libraries than in their academic counterparts. Very little is known about how well this rule applies to school library media centers because very few quantitative studies on them are reported in the research literature.

As expected, the size of the core will vary within Dewey subject categories. For example, if the circulation of books on photography is examined, you may find that 25 percent of the holdings in this area are in the core, while books from the travel section that are in the

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[2] Trueswell, R.W. "Some Behavioral Patterns of Library Users, the 80/20 Rule." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 43 (January 1969): 458–61.

core represent less than 10 percent of that total books on travel in the collection. Why bother to look at statistics like this? Collection managers should look for a correlation or relationship between holdings in a subject and circulation patterns for the subject. Suppose you know that books on travel represent a greater percentage of your total holdings than books on photography, while books on photography are accounting for a much larger percentage of circulation than books on travel. This tells you that buying patterns should be adjusted.

In doing an analysis of circulation, it is also possible to determine the age of the materials that circulate. Take travel as an example again. Suppose no travel books over five years old are circulating. This type of information provides a strong weeding clue. Why waste valuable shelf space on materials of no interest to users? Small collections, like those in schools, have to respond quickly to the changing interests of clients. In order to get more mileage from the funds and space available, collections should be focused on materials classes that are highly used, rather than on building up poorer quality but little used sections of the collection. In other words, it is more sensible to build on demonstrated use if higher circulation is the goal.

There are various other quantitative methods that can be applied to collection evaluation and collection decision making. Standards are often used to evaluate collections. This is based on the belief that "more is better" and that quantity is a predictor of quality. *Media Programs, District and School* carries recommendations for the number of items that should be included in a base collection for schools. Many of the standard checklists also operate on the assumption that a certain number of items are needed for a quality collection. The problem with this type of reasoning is that size alone is certainly no indicator of the collection's ability to respond to demand. A large collection of obsolete, little-used items is worth less than a very small, highly used collection.

There are also bibliometric techniques that have been applied to examine the utility of collections. Libraries that work with scholars have taken their works (i.e., journal articles or books) and examined bibliographic references. This is done to determine whether the article or book could have been written using material from a particular library. Work produced by students can be examined in the same way. In a study conducted for the U.S. Department of Education, bibliometric techniques were applied to describe the types of materials that approximately 2,000 young adults referenced in their papers or projects when they had to go beyond classroom texts for school assignments. The students in this study came from a broad spectrum of schools (small to large, suburban to metropolitan to rural). They were from a variety of school levels and subject areas (ninth through twelfth grades; all ability levels; and subject areas including the sciences, social studies, and humanities). Use patterns allowed the investigators to make suggestions about how specific types of materials are used. For example, a core group of magazine titles was identified and recommendations were made for how far back these titles should be retained in school collections. This is one example of how the research literature can offer insights that can be applied to collection evaluation decisions. This study, for example, offers library media specialists a small buying list for magazines that seems to hold up across schools, as well as a methodology for collecting local use data.[5]

The most frequently reported method of evaluation in the school media area focuses on inputs to the collection. Quality is measured by the number of titles on a master checklist and the options of teachers or librarians on the value of the collection.

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[5] Drott, M. Carl and Mancall, Jacqueline C. "Magazines as Information Sources: Patterns of Student Use." *School Media Quarterly* 8 (Summer 1980): 240–250.

Output measurements can be performed, but they require more training. With a little training in statistics and by using a packaged statistical program and a computer, it is possible to randomly select a sample of titles from a collection's shelflist and examine local patterns of use. For example, for a small collection of approximately 12,000 items, it would be statistically sound to randomly select less than 300 items and from these items be able to say a great deal about the circulation patterns within various subjects. A library media specialist could also randomly sample circulation and do counts within subject areas, looking not only at which subjects are circulating, but also at the age of the materials that appear useful and the length of time used materials sit on the shelves between circulations.

If necessary, it is possible to consider the probable availability of a group of specific titles. This can be accomplished by developing checklists of titles and collecting data on their availability. Some questions to ask include: How many are owned? What is the capability of obtaining them elsewhere? What would the response time be for locating particular titles? (e.g., immediately, within two days, within a week, within three weeks).

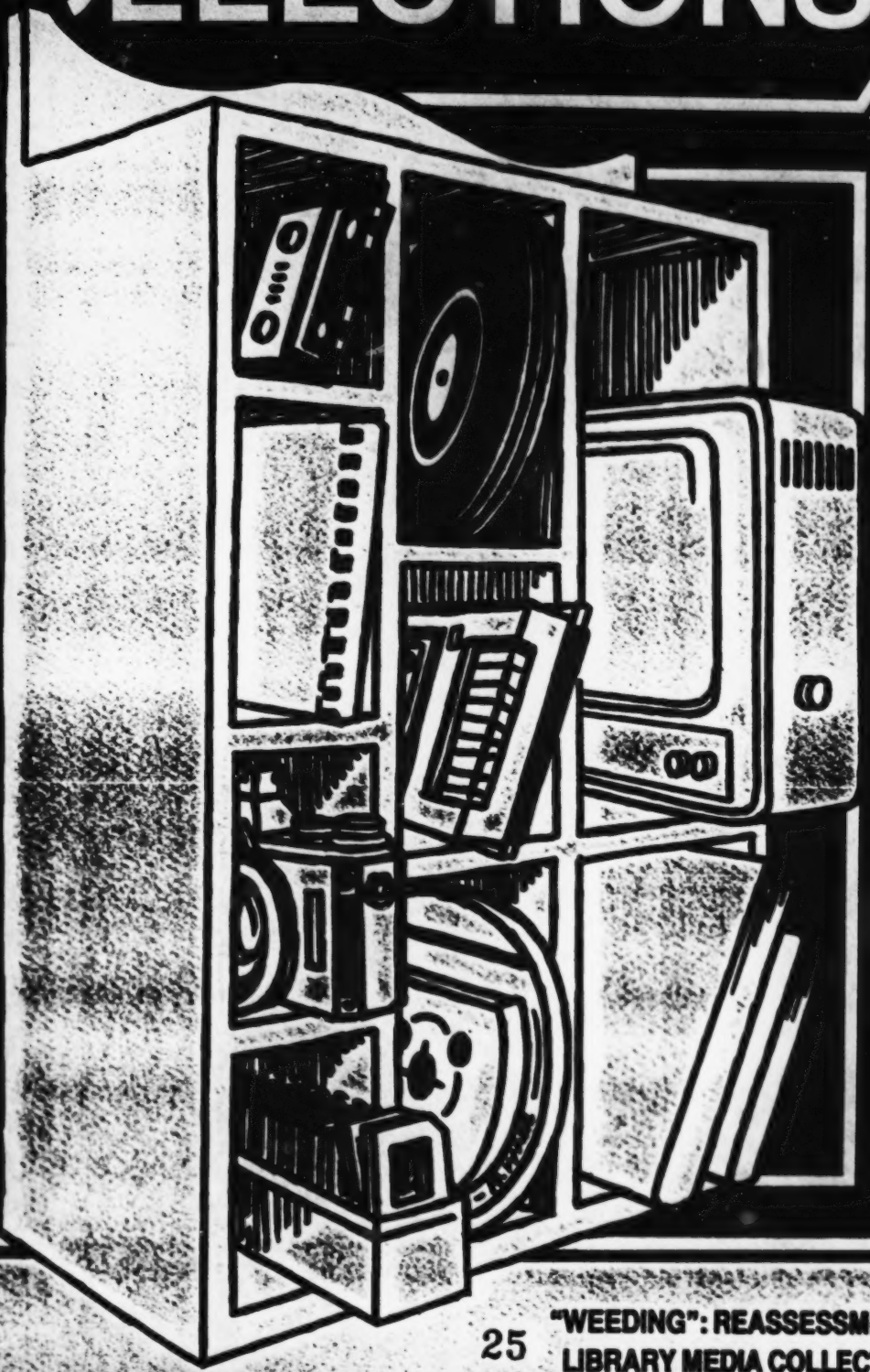
There are certain facts that school library media specialists should keep in mind when evaluating collections. The literature in the field indicates that when collections are examined closely, it is not unusual to find the following:

1. Many items are rarely used. This does not mean librarians are poor selectors. There is an underlying phenomenon at work here: a small number of items appear to receive a great portion of the use. This is not a pattern that can be changed; however, there would be little risk in removing unused items from a collection after a period of time.
2. The best predictor of future use is past use.
3. Since in-building use studies approximate circulation, the patterns produced from circulation studies are appropriate for evaluation decision making.
4. It is possible to identify the characteristics of useful materials from the research literature and apply these to collection evaluation decisions. In the example offered previously, a core group of magazine titles was identified and holding patterns were suggested for them.

It is important to remember that evaluation is not an exercise performed for its own sake. The reason for the evaluation should be clear. Is the evaluation being performed so that monetary resources can be targeted to support present usage patterns? If so, it will be necessary to select techniques that measure the current use of materials. On the other hand, the evaluator may be interested in determining how good a local collection is in relation to an established norm or standard. If such comparisons are the end goal of the evaluation, then techniques that use standards and checklists of recommended titles should be selected. In all cases, the reasons for the evaluation and the local conditions should determine the method selected and the techniques used.

BUILDING LIBRARY MEDIA

COLLECTIONS



25 **"WEEDING": REASSESSMENT OF LIBRARY MEDIA COLLECTIONS**

"WEEDING": REASSESSMENT OF LIBRARY MEDIA COLLECTIONS

Maintenance of any viable school library media center collection should be a regular, continuous process. Each school library media collection should reflect changes in the student body, new curriculum and changes of emphasis in ongoing curriculum, new issues and concerns, and current interests of faculty and students. Those questions and needs that were used to establish the collection continue to be of value.

Reassessment of the collection adds a dimension to the overall assessment process. Whereas the primary consideration in initial selection and purchase focuses on additions, reassessment includes examination of present holdings to determine the need to repair, replace, or remove. These three "Rs" of "weeding" require the unique training of school library media personnel and the cooperation of school staff members to determine what is valuable for the school program.

Decisions concerning the collection may be made based on the following general criteria.

Condition:
Antiquated appearance can discourage use. Materials with unattractive covers or containers; books with small print and faded, brittle, yellow pages; and materials with missing components, pages, or sections deter use. Likewise, warped sound recordings or video and audio recordings with deletions will frustrate users. If materials should remain in the collection, replacements are warranted. Otherwise, materials may be considered for discard.

Duplication:
Often a collection includes duplicate titles that may no longer be of interest to the students. These materials may be removed and transferred to library media centers where such items could be used.

Age:
Materials that are dated are subject for review and removal. For example, reference sources in geography that are over ten years old, almanacs and yearbooks that have been superseded, science materials in categories where facts change drastically in a five-year period, and encyclopedias that have not been updated for over five years should be considered for replacement. Often such items as films, videos, and filmstrip kits include photographs that may be dated or biased.

Use:
During a regular inventory, materials should be examined for the amount of use they receive. If an item hasn't circulated for over five years after highlighting it, perhaps it should be considered for removal so that it could be sent to some site where it could be used. Periodicals not indexed or used after being promoted, or reference sources not used might also be considered for removal.

The suggestions made are, of course, general in nature. Each library media center has a unique population. It is only through regular ongoing inventory that careful and thoughtful

decisions can be made and balance maintained. The criteria suggested should be considered as a guide only. While duplicate titles might not be used one year, the course might be taught again later. Certain fiction titles fluctuate in popularity.

Usually, inventory allows the library media specialist to examine each section of the collection using the shelflist. Not only can each section be examined, but judgements about the entire collection can be made. There are certain considerations for each section of the library media center collection for those who organize the materials by the Dewey Decimal Classification System. The following guidelines are offered.

General Reference:
Encyclopedias should be considered for updating after five years and usually no later than ten years. Much of the information will be outdated. Bibliographical sources will need to be considered within this same time frame. Yearbooks and almanacs should be updated as superseded. (In some cases, yearbooks and almanacs are kept for use in history classes or for instruction in use of the source. If so, current documents should be retained and older versions kept in other more appropriate areas.)

000s:
Computer materials will change rapidly with the technology. Replacement may be required more often. Consideration might be given to paperback versions.

100s:
Self-help psychology and guidance materials may need to be reviewed for dated pictures and concepts.

200s:
Philosophical and religious materials should be reviewed individually and as a collection to ensure that as many points of view as possible are presented.

300s:
Certain subject areas will need constant revision while others should be very carefully and seldom weeded. Basic sources on customs and volumes on folklore will probably be removed only because of poor physical condition. On the other hand, sources on local, state, and national government should be current. Depending on the curriculum, historical coverage of economics, communication, transportation, politics, and education will be maintained. Review of audiovisual sources for dated dress and mannerisms is especially important.

400s:
Depending on the size and use of the collection, old grammar materials and foreign language sources should be examined for dated examples and illustrations. Dictionaries differ in words included, especially slang words that have come into common usage.

500s:
Unless general science works have become classics, obsolete materials should be discarded. Each scientific area differs in the rate of change. Astronomy materials may become dated before botany sources. New discoveries in energy may require updating works in this field more often than materials in subjects such as natural history. Certain materials present ideas

in unique ways and should be carefully considered before discarding. Many materials related to the environment are still appropriate after fifteen years while an item about atoms could be inaccurate after two years.

600s:
Many of the concerns identified for the 500s apply to the 600s as well. Certain materials on medicine, radio, television, industry, space exploration, and automobiles will become dated rapidly. Other areas such as pets, crafts, and cookbooks may be used often and need to be replaced because of their condition.

700s:
This section often includes collections of handsomely illustrated sources on art, music, and other fine arts. These materials may be irreplaceable. Sources that are heavily used should be considered for replacement or, as is often the case, rebinding. Materials on certain hobbies may need updating. Use patterns should play a role in determining what needs updating. Sources on various sports should be current with duplicate copies available.

800s:
Literary history should seldom be discarded unless drastic curriculum changes are made. Collections versus individual works of major and minor poets, novelists, and playwrights may be weighed against curriculum needs and use patterns.

900s:
Many geography and travel materials tend to become dated quickly. Except for items that have become classics, geography and travel materials that are over ten years old should be considered for removal and replacement. Historical materials should be examined for use patterns as well as bias. The collection should contain a range of materials on all historical periods and examined for coverage. Those materials once purchased for coverage may be replaced with items of better quality.

Fiction and Easy:
Use patterns greatly influence the review of fiction collections. Materials popular one year will sit on the shelves at other times. Duplicates once needed may no longer be appropriate. Replacement of popular worn items must be considered. Rebinding of materials for out of print items may be an option for materials that fill a specific curriculum need or reading interest.

It has been mentioned that reassessment of the collection should be a regular activity. It is not recommended that the library media center be closed while an inventory is completed. Rather, a routine for reviewing each section may be established.

The judicious reassessment of library media collections allows for continuous support of curriculum in a school.